

Northern trappers looking forward to strong prices for giant house-sized reindeer this year.

Full story inside.

Upcoming

*New North
Waterworks:
April 2017*

Saskatchewan Association of
Northern Communities

**NEW
NORTH**

This month ..

- Youth Surveys
- Educational Governance Review
- RCMP Staffing
- Monthly Sudoku Returns!

**Monthly Newsletter
December 2016**

2016: The Year in Review!

Nope. Not doing it.

Northern Communities Successful in Canada 150 Thing

Whether it's because they showed the appropriate amount of patriotic fervour, or just had really good submissions, we are pleased to see northern communities cleaning up in the grants department, with four northern municipalities joining a number of northern First Nations as recipients of Canada 150 Infrastructure Program funds.

The successful communities include the NV of Green Lake, who are looking at covering every square inch of the community with solar panels, starting with the Community Recreation Facility, for which they received \$55,000 from the program

toward the \$130,000 expected costs of putting panels on the roof.

Air Ronge received \$25,000 and Ile a la Crosse \$125,000 for their respective ice rink upgrades.

La Loche wanted a splash park, and now they'll get one with help from the \$93,000 they got.

The northern municipal recipients were among 62 across Saskatchewan. Canada 150 Infrastructure Program supports recreation and cultural projects, and supplies up to 50% of a project's costs, with the recipients providing the rest.

Countdown to Census 2016 Countup ...

It seems like ages ago that we all had to sit around for the census people to come knocking, but soon the waiting for municipal officials, researchers, government and the census-takers themselves (impatient to see if they totally nailed it this time), will be over, with the first lot of data rolling out pretty soon.

Population and dwelling counts are the first cabs off the rank on February 8. Coincidentally, that's the last day of SUMA Convention, so expect to see lots of consoling going on, and perhaps even a little horse-trading among municipal officials. We have no idea what we mean by that.

The census is important for a number of reasons, not the least of which are the number of grants that will use the 2016 figures as their "base year."

What we are also really looking forward to comes along a bit later: in October, we get to see data on Aboriginal peoples, and just as interesting, Immigration and ethnocultural diversity. I think you'll agree that immigration is impacting the north; it'll be interesting to see what that is looking like statistically.

NewNorth News & Updates

Advisory Panel Recommends Keewatin Yatthe and Mamawetan Health Regions Become One “Service Area”

The province’s move to a single Health Authority has come as a shock to many, defying even the worst case scenario of 4 or 5 health regions. A saving grace is perhaps that the north will likely be considered a “service area,” and Athabasca remains untouched. We’ll have more about the health region mergers next month.

New North Waterworks: Prince Albert, April 11 & 12, 2017

The reason why we have the New North Waterworks in the month of April is shrouded in mystery and probably lost to time, but we think it has something to do with April being the month when water mains are least likely to burst.

So, virtually guaranteed to coincide with all your water mains suddenly bursting, we are going ahead with planning an April Waterworks, with the tentative dates of the 11th and 12th, or sometime around then, with Challenge Exams scheduled for the 13th. The location will be Prince Albert Travelodge.

Perrins Report: New North Responds

The Educational Governance Report by Dan Perrins is out now and awaiting your response. See our overview and initial thoughts about the report later in this newsletter.

We see this review, alongside the likely changes to the health regions, as potentially signalling a reversal of 40 years of gains in northern governance. New North is intending to present a formal submission detailing our concerns about the erosion of northern control over decisions affecting northerners. If you would like your concerns to be included alongside ours, get them to us ASAP (**the deadline is January 23 for online submissions**).

You can alternatively just submit something yourselves by checking out:

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/public-consultations/share-your-thoughts-on-the-k-12-education-governance-review>

New North Goes to Pine House

New North caught up with the mayor and council (and administration) of Pine House early December. Below we see: Councillors Vince Natomagan, Leona Lariviere, Betty Ann Derocher, CAO Martine Smith, Councillor Conrad Misponas, and Mayor Mike Natomagan.

In the background you can see the work of local artist Gary Natomagan (who, incidentally, designed the New North logo back in the day). The bit you see is only a fragment of a mural that extends in an unbroken panorama around all four walls of the council chamber, immersing you in a northern tableau that is complete with rearing bears, a trappers camp, views of the rushing water, and trees – lots and lots of trees. How anyone gets work done in there, we have no idea. Amazingly, it took the artist only a week to complete. More impressive, apparently (we forgot to go look), is a similar panorama in the community hall.



From the New North Chair

BY BRUCE FIDLER, MAYOR OF CREIGHTON & NEW NORTH CHAIR

Abelated Happy New Year to all! I hope everyone had a great holiday season. As the new year is here I would like to begin by saying that I am excited to be elected back to the New North Executive and honoured to have been chosen to sit as the Chair. I also want to congratulate the other elected Board members—Gord Stomp from Air Ronge; Keith Laprise from Stony Rapids; Robert St. Pierre from La Loche; and Mike Natomagan from Pine House. I know they are as excited as I am to represent you and to be able to advocate the issues and concerns on behalf of our northern communities.

Realizing that the next four years are going to be challenging with the position the province is presently in, I feel that we as a whole are up to the challenge. We all know the issues and challenges we face in the north, and I believe that the solutions are also here in the north. We have the knowledge and expertise, we just need to work together with the proper ministries.

As your representative on the SUMA Board I would like to give you a quick update on SUMA

activity. There were a number of new Directors since the municipal elections in October 2016. At our December 2016 meeting, we welcomed the new Directors and familiarized them with the issues and with board procedures. There was a lot focus on the upcoming **SUMA Convention**, being held in **Saskatoon from February 5th to the 8th**. As Vice Chair of the Convention Committee, I am looking forward to an exciting Convention. There are many excellent education and information sessions and presentations planned, and plenty of entertainment. I hope to see everyone at the Convention, and more importantly, at the **Northern Regional Meeting** to be held **Tuesday February 7th, at 1.50pm**. Please highlight this in your agenda as this Regional meeting is an opportune time for northern representation to be present to discuss and address northern issues.

Once again, I want to say I am looking forward to working with the New North Executive and staff, and all of you, going forward.

New North Upcoming Advocacy and Consultation Agenda

Mid-January: New North is scheduled to meet with RCMP Assistant Commissioner Curtis Zablocki in Regina. The meeting is intended as a “meet-and-greet” with the new CO, and to familiarize him with both New North and the policing issues that are brought to our table by our members. We are also aiming to get the Northern Policing Advisory Committee back into full swing.

Mid-January: New North is scheduled to present a submission to the Educational Governance Review Panel. We hope to emphasize the importance—both symbolically and practically—of retaining educational governance in the north.

Early February: The New North Executive is scheduled to sit down with the (relatively new) Minister of Government Relations, Hon. Donna Harpauer, during the SUMA Convention. On the agenda will most likely be a range of northern and municipal issues, including northern revenue sharing, the flow of capital funds to northern water and sewer projects, and New North’s role as a northern municipal association. As well we will be bringing the minister up-to-date with some of the association’s plans and planned activities for this year, and seeking the appropriate support where we think it is necessary. **If there’s anything you’d particularly like to bring to the minister’s attention, please let us know ASAP, by emailing me at fid@sasktel.net or the New North CEO at matt.newnorth@sasktel.net.**

Community Visits: We are always looking for opportunities to come pay you a visit, so keep an eye out for us!

Cannabis Legalization

Task Force Recommends Federal Government Educate People to Not Consume the Very Thing That They Are About to Make Available to Consume

“Our focus is on protecting our kids and protecting our streets,” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

The timeline seems hopelessly ambitious, but the federal government has vowed nevertheless to have legislation on the table by Spring that will make pot, whacky tobacky, weed, what have you, freely available over the counter in the same way that it is now only mostly freely available online, in most school quadrangles, at the parking lots of any Denny’s you care to name, Dave’s place, and a shortbread tin entombed under the floorboards of a house we rented for a while way back (just kidding about that one).

The government re-iterated its commitment to the timeline following the Task Force on Cannabis Regulation handing down its FRAMEWORK FOR THE LEGALIZATION AND REGULATION OF CANNABIS IN CANADA mid-December.

Although the government doesn’t have to accept any of the recommendations, the document is likely to be basis of its legislative agenda, hewn as it is from the government’s own terms of reference, which has as its priority the yanking of the commercial exploitation of cannabis out of the hands of criminals and putting it into the hands of slick multi-national grow-ops, and which will, perhaps more crucially, be the basis for a thriving sub-genre of marketing specialists whose sole occupation will be thinking of imaginative ways of punning on the extensive linguistic infrastructure that has accompanied the cultural and actual consumption of “stinkweed” over the generations.

Among the many recommendations include:

- Minimum age of purchase to be 18
- A minimum price be set by the federal government
- Taxes to reflect the level of potency of the product to discourage the use of cannabis with higher a THC rating
- Indigenous communities be given help to get into the market
- People be allowed to grow four plants of their own, with height restrictions, and with the oversight and approval of local authorities

Although the key piece of the Task Force’s objective was to find a way through the legal and

regulatory minefield, what seems to come through instead is a general feeling of unreadiness. Indeed, in the days following the release of the recommendations government officials were already suggesting that the full legal sale of recreational cannabis won’t happen until 2019.

Some issues that need to be dealt with in the near term include how the provinces will gain access to the tax revenues generated by the commercialization of cannabis. Indeed, the Task Force recognized that provinces can set their own tax rates on cannabis, opening up huge potential for arbitrage plays in the event provinces go in different directions (ie, people buying up stock in a province with low taxes, and then selling under the table into a province with higher taxes). We can imagine higher taxes in Saskatchewan and Alberta, where the legalization of cannabis is not widely supported (I know: the irony, right). Some of the Task Force stakeholders recommended that taxes be standardized across the board.

Municipal stakeholders don’t appear to have too many concerns at this point. Increase fire calls might be expected because of greater use of closet-based hydroponics (although, with personal grow limits at 4 or 5 plants, maybe they won’t be kept in the closet so much).

Municipalities will have control over the sale of the product similar to how they have control over alcohol retailing, so the real issues will rather be more public policy-related: do we want retailing in our community, and if we don’t allow it, what will be the impact of that? This will be an especially important discussion in isolated communities. We may find cannabis management programs in communities similar to the alcohol management programs we are seeing now, but much more youth-focused.

With this in mind, the stakeholder response to the question of how tax revenues should be spent is perhaps one of the more curious aspects of the Task Force’s recommendations. Virtually everyone agreed that “cannabis regulation should prioritize public health and safety, not revenues,” but that any “revenues should be redirected to support prevention and treatment programs for people with cannabis dependence.” What is curious is how utterly at odds such recommendations are to the way revenues from alcohol are presently allocated to deal with alcohol-related dependency.■

RCMP Staffing Issues

Leaked RCMP Emails Reveal Critical Shortages of Coffee, Creamer and Sundry Supplies Actual Cops in Northern Detachments

Coming like a taser burst on a cold October-evening drug bust, the emails that found their way into the media last month detailing much more severe staff shortages in northern detachments than even we suspected—which sparked an RCMP crisis management plan into action that itself then needed to be crisis managed—had the ultimate and desirable benefit of flushing out what everyone except the general public, the Ministry of Justice, the Premier, and us, knew about the human resource issues facing the police, the compounding impact of shortages on the workloads of RCMP members, the frustrations of high level officers at it all, and the apparent continued underground existence of the use of the word “provost.”

It all began when the radio station CKOM published a leaked email thread on their website where northern commander, Supt. Grant St. Germaine, is asking for help from the south to help fill vacancies in northern detachments, particularly La Ronge, Stanley Mission and Wollaston Lake, and receiving the response that no help could be provided, because everyone else was understaffed as well.

While the staffing issues have been well-known for quite some time—having, for example, been raised publicly at SUMA last year—what was revealing was the extent of the problem: in September, the RCMP held a press conference where they said the vacancy-rate was 3% across the board. However, in the email chain it is stated that the vacancy rate is closer to 8%, and up to 15% in the north.

But perhaps just as interesting were the respective responses of the RCMP senior command, the Premier, and Ministry of Justice officials.

The RCMP, as we all know, is contracted by the province to provide policing. Staffing issues are the RCMP’s problem, and quite rightly so.

Publicly, that is how that narrative has typically played out: if you have a problem with detachment numbers, talk to the RCMP.

While attempting to “walk back” the email in the days following the leak, though, RCMP Supt. Kris Vibe gave every impression of throwing the



Supt Grant St. Germaine, North District Commander

province under the bus: “Policing is a provincial responsibility and communities and provinces decide how much they’re willing to invest in policing and that’s how we get the resources we have,” he told the radio station CKOM.

The Premier and Ministry of Justice responses played by the script. The Premier expressed surprise at the vacancy rate, and said leaders

have a right to know where the officers are, but seemed to frame the issue as a failure of the RCMP to deliver on its contract with the province, rather than an issue of funding.

He told the media: “At the end of the day there is also a fundamental responsibility on the part of the police force that you contract with, in this case the RCMP, to deliver core public safety ... And if that contract is not being able to be fulfilled for whatever reason in terms of numbers, in terms of officers, you bet that’s a concern.”

Ministry of Justice officials were also totally floored by vacancy rates, one of whom said as much to the media when asked to comment: “We’re floored,” he said, or words to that effect.

It took a clean-up operation by newly-minted RCMP assistant commissioner Curtis Zablocki to get things back on track, appearing to “walk back” the earlier walking back by Kris Vibe, staying clear of the funding issue—reportedly, anyhow—when speaking on John Gormley’s

“We are running out of people.”
Supt. Grant St. Germaine

radio show. Instead, he focused on ways the force could utilize existing resources to fill the vacancies, telling Gormley that the force was planning to undertake a comprehensive review of staffing: “I need to be comfortable that our resources, including our specialized resources, are deployed appropriately and in the right places,” the CO said.

Of course, while the government may not have known the extent of the vacancies, it knew something was going on. Quite apart from everything else, instead of sending the Receiver General of Canada a cheque for \$179,198,000 and change for RCMP services, as per its Budget estimate in 2015-16, it sent them \$172,351,420 and change, or about \$5.6 million less than budgeted, for, as the Ministry of Justice’s Annual Report notes, “under expenditure for the RCMP contract.” Surely they asked why it was unexpended.

This year, the RCMP contract is budgeted at \$180,606,000, a tiny increase over last year’s estimate, but, as we saw, about 4.5% above the actual spend in 2015-16. The increase in the RCMP contract since 2010-11 seems pretty healthy at 33%, up from \$135 million to \$180 million today—this during a time when police numbers have generally fallen on a per capita basis. (Significantly, according to Statscan, the number of female police officers is the only personnel category that is increasing.)

Although provincial funding seems sufficient, over the long term, we can look forward to a slow-bleed. But there are additional issues. The pressures on RCMP staffing will persist, if for no other reason than the difficulties the RCMP experiences in recruiting and retaining bodies; the increasing number of women in the force; and the rising crime rate in the south—or at least, the

Other Tidbits from the Leaked RCMP Emails

At the “current time,” the [Northern] District is operating 15% short of bodies (42 members). (St. Germaine)

The RCMP provides assistance to the ambulance services by transporting a person who is considered violent, which inevitably leaves the local detachment short.

A member was injured transporting a suicidal patient

The staffing situation does not seem to be getting any better. “I hate to say that I can’t see the light at the end of the tunnel, but I can’t. We are in dire straits.” (St. Germaine)

perception of a rising crime rate—which, with their prohibitive economies of scale, will continue to put political pressure on the RCMP to respond. We have no idea who, or even why, the emails were leaked to the media. If nothing else, it might hint at discontent in the ranks. Regardless of how well the government and the RCMP higher-ups managed to get the narrative back on track, you would think that internally sparks are flying. We haven’t heard the last of this. ■

New North Infographic Series: *What Government May Also Not Know About*

What Government May Also Not Know About ...

The Habsburg Empire

- It’s one of history’s longest lasting empires, beginning in early 11th century and lasting all the way until the 20th century.
- The name Habsburg is derived from the castle of Habsburg, or Habichtsburg (“Hawk’s Castle”), built in 1020 by Werner, bishop of Strasbourg, and his brother-in-law, Count Radbot, in the Aargau overlooking the Aar River, in what is now Switzerland.
- The Habsburg empire spanned most of Europe at one point. It became centred in what we now call Austria in the 13th century. It was at different times based Germany, Spain, Italy and Hungary.
- Like any empire, you had to have an emperor. The emperor of the Hasburg Empire was commonly known as the Holy Roman Emperor.
- Although formally dissolved after the first world war in Austria, there are still “Hasburgs” claiming imperial hereditary rights.

Grades 7-12 Youth Survey

Youth Survey Sheds Disturbing Light on Well-Being of Sask.

Students, the Frustrating Limits of Youth Well-Being Surveys

The Saskatchewan Alliance for Youth and Community Well-Being Youth Health Survey got serial media attention when it was released December. Of the many particularly disturbing revelations the media focussed on included the report's one small paragraph-mention of suicide.

The paragraph goes:

Almost one in five (19%) of students had considered suicide in the previous 12 months. Overall, 11% of students had attempted suicide once or more in the past year. More female students had attempted suicide once (8%) or more than once (6%) in the previous year as compared to male students (5% once, 3% more than once).

And that's it. Can this be right? 11% of students had *attempted* suicide *once or more* in the past year, and it rates one small paragraph? More words in the report were given to "sun and ultraviolet radiation safety" (this is Saskatchewan: 25 people a year die from melanoma), "weight perceptions" (about 4% of overweight kids think they are "just right," compared to 100% of overweight people in this office who think they could "add a few pounds"), sleep (no one gets enough; big surprise there), and sexual activity (frightening, if we are to believe the numbers). How often students drink milk, or milk substitutes, also got more space, as did the amount of wholegrains they eat and the number of times they consumed a "meal replacement bar, shake or other supplement." The report helpfully points out that "the Sport Nutrition Advisory Committee recommends that athletes should have their diet assessed by a registered dietician who specializes in sports nutrition to determine if extra protein or other supplements are warranted." That is, if kids can get those suicidal thoughts out of their heads long enough to arrange an appointment, of course.

It turns out that the report could probably have said a little more about suicide ideation and those suicide attempts if it had wanted to. Responses to two additional questions on suicide were suppressed by the report. Question 44 of the survey completed by students asked if they knew of anyone else who had attempted suicide. And question 45 asked if students had "ever sought a therapist or counselor."

There are probably valid reasons for keeping the responses to these questions out of the report (perhaps no one answered them ... but then,

wouldn't that be interesting in itself?). But it seems important to know if these students are getting the support they need, or if they feel they can talk to someone (there is, be it noted, a battery of questions on "engagement in school and community," where kids were asked "if I need help, I would talk to a counsellor [sic] or adult"—which 65% of students said they did; it is the response with respect of seeking help for self-harm—an entirely separate question—that is suppressed).

We also can't know whether students on reserve, or who live on farms or in the cities, have higher rates of ideation or have made attempts on their own life. Frustratingly, the report tells us nothing, other than there are about 900 kids out there who've attempted suicide in the last year, and at least 2000 who have thought about it.

Perhaps there is another report in the works, perhaps one that answer these additional questions: Did the students who said "no" to whether they "feel safe in my own home," "feel my family supports me," and "feel motivated to do well in school" also answer "yes" to the questions on self-harm? Was there a correlation between students answering "no" to having at least "one close friend I can share things with," or "if I need help, I would talk to counsellor [sic]" and those who said "yes" to self-harm?

Overall, the survey got about 9,230 responses, but with some school divisions not wanting data from their localities published the report includes data from only 8,832 of those. You can certainly sense some sensitivity to revealing too much: while school divisions will get the data and be able to draw their own conclusions as to how well they are doing, anyone wanting to drill down further will need to put in an application to get it. You can do that by going to the following:

<http://saycm.com/resources/accessing-data/>

At the end of the day, we don't want to be too critical of what has been achieved here: we can easily see why school divisions would be concerned by the results of the survey, especially since it was essentially based on self-selection (in other words, students who were more likely to be "troubled" may have felt more inclined to participate). But the superficiality of the report does more to frustrate than illuminate, and we have to wonder whose interests are really being served by that. ■

Review of Educational Governance

Perrins Report: Will Government Do For Education What They Are Doing for Health?

We examine the rationale behind the Perrins Review into Educational Governance reform.

In a busy month for reports, the provincial government released its review of Educational Governance, authored by Dan Perrins, just before Christmas, and followed up with an announcement of the panel of six whose job it will be to oversee the public consultations on the report, to wrap up late January 2017. Mayor of Ile a la Crosse and New North's former Deputy Chair, Duane Favel, is on that panel.

Given the radical nature of at least one of the options presented by Perrins, the timeframe for consultations seems impossibly short. Cynically, it might be argued that the government has already made up its mind. It's also possible that this is all just a smokescreen for the far more radical and wide-reaching reforms to health that were just announced (more about that next month; as usual, we'll be setting our guns to sassy).

In the meantime, the big question is: why? Why has government even decided to embark on educational governance reform?

The report actually provides—at least on the surface—some pretty compelling reasons. Perhaps most surprising (and to our mind, the weakest reason) is the implication of the decision by government to set education property tax mill rates. Apparently, “the change meant, according to accounting standards, that there was sufficient evidence of government control to require that government consolidate the financial information of school divisions within its summary financial statements,” with the added implication that government was now “fiscally vulnerable to decisions legislatively delegated to locally-elected school boards” (11-12). Essentially, government is now accountable for decisions that they have, evidently, very little control over.

Each of the next three sets of reasons for reform are also related to government's varying inability to affect decision-making at the board level. For example, the ministry is presently hamstrung to do anything about the very “challenged” student achievement

outcomes in Saskatchewan. On the face of it, this is unarguable. As far as Saskatchewan's performance in Science, Reading and Math goes, we come dead last (13). In other words, the report may be read to imply that the current way education operates now is failing students anyway, so why not change it.

The report notes that Government also has no control over how school boards allocate resources, organize their buses, negotiate staffing contracts, student services (ie, speech therapy, counselling, psychology assessments), among many other things, which means “students in one school division having a different educational experience from the students in the next school division depending upon the staffing decisions, the programs offered and the supports provided” (14).

Of course, we might simply point out that that is precisely the point: the experience of a northern kid should absolutely be different to that of a kid in Saskatoon. However, Perrins is probably being kind: he is really referring to the *quality* of the educational experience being different.

The Options

Given that the overall theme driving reform—government control, or lack of it, over education in the province—you would think that the first option presented for consideration is the subsuming of educational governance into the ministry itself, perhaps controlled by a single board, which could be either elected or appointed. And sure enough, it is. In this option, the present school divisions could become 4 to 6 six regional “service areas” which, intriguingly, “could align with health services and with current school division boundaries” (21). (Intriguing because Perrins' report came out before we saw which way the province was going on health reform; I guess Perrins knew.)

The second option takes the regional model (consisting, presumably, of 4 to 6 regions), but gives each region its own board. Again,

the boards would be directly accountable to the Minister of Education.

The third option is simply a division model like we have now, but would see a reduction of the number of divisions to between 8 and 14, using various criteria as a guide (such as transportation routes and such). Critical to this option is the “implementation of an entity to drive sector wide operational efficiencies” (24). It’s probably thought that a smaller number of divisions would make the creation of efficiencies more ... efficient. The final option is similar to option 3, but would rather see changes and re-alignments of the existing divisions.

Each of the last two options also involves the introduction of a suite of changes to governance policies. For example: the standardization of governance costs (remuneration rates for board members); the standardization of pay rates and collective bargaining; the requirement for mandatory board training; the likely introduction of an Education Quality Council (which would operate similarly to the Health Quality Council); the centralization of IT services, payroll, procurement and purchasing, and many other things.

Is Government Asking the Wrong Question?

While focusing our attention on the reform of educational governance is obviously the point of the report, it’s possible that governance reform is not actually the answer to the most important question: how can we help kids achieve the best educational outcomes possible. Indeed, the small section of the report on “Student Achievement and Board Governance” notes that “school boards form only one element of the context in which learning occurs and thus it is challenging to isolate the impact of school board governance in student achievement” (9). Somewhat airily, Perrins remarks that “there appears to be more research on broader questions of school leadership than there is research focused on the impact of school boards on learning” (9). In other words, governance itself seems to have such a negligible effect on student outcomes that it isn’t worth even talking about. So why are we talking about it?

Additionally, is governance reform really needed to achieve any of the “efficiencies” that

government is seeking? After all, the present governance structure costs all of \$11 million a year—a sizeable chunk, to be sure. But how many public servants would that get you in a full-service ministry? (Our answer: 86). The report itself notes the success of the Education Sector Strategic Plan, which is essentially an agreement formed among the school boards to work together, in not only closing the achievement gap for students, but finding “efficiencies” well above their targeted \$5 million, achieving \$9 million in savings for the 2015-16 school year. Throw in one hell of a can drive, and that’s the cost of your board for you right there.

Which Way Will They Go?

The options presented above go from the hardest to easiest to implement (and from most expensive to least expensive). They also go from the most politically-risky to the least. Going the other way, options 3 and 4 deliver the least amount of reform, and hit fewer of the government’s objectives. The latter seem more targeted at delivering cost efficiencies, reigning in the power of the boards and throwing a bit of muscle around, than enhancing the goal of educational achievement.

The Perrins Report presents a very good case as to why government might want to see governance reform in education. The problem is that it doesn’t present a good case as to why anyone else would want it. There is no evidence that more ministerial control would increase student achievement, or improve efficiencies enough to achieve cost savings. What we will see in the next month or so, however, is a very strong, very passionate, very cogent case being put forward for why we should keep things more or less as they are. Politically, it’s hard to think of a greater risk-to-reward curve for a radical overhaul of educational governance than that presented in the Perrins Report. Then again, we thought that about health region amalgamations, too.■

Details about how to respond to the Perrins Report can be found by going to:

<http://www.saskatchewan.ca/government/public-consultations/share-your-thoughts-on-the-k-12-education-governance-review>

FROM THE CEO

MATT HELEY

Of the 124 people elected to municipal government among the northern towns, villages and hamlets at last October/September's local elections, about 43 are women. That's 34%.

Skewing the numbers a little bit is the number of single-gendered councils elected. Three have all-male councils; there is one all-female council (Jans Bay).

In all, more than half of the 23 municipalities had less than 25% female representation on council. Including Jans Bay, just four municipalities had more than 50% female representation. No councils with 7 members had greater than 3 female councillors.

Still, we are doing better than the Saskatchewan legislature: just 26% of MLAs are women.

Is the disparity between men and women in northern local government an issue?

Frankly, we don't know. It's never really come up before. The reason we've probably never noticed a disparity is because the north has a good record of electing women into local government.

For many people the issue is a non-starter. The formal institutional barriers to women's participation in local government have long been dismantled. We are light years away from the time when only men aged 21 and over with property or an operational cow could run in municipal elections.

But clearly barriers still exist.

The question is: can we do anything about it? At the senior political level, parties can deal with disparities by setting quotas for female candidates.

There doesn't seem to be precedent for quotas in municipal elections, and it's unlikely that there's much appetite for that anyway.

Perhaps the best we can say right now is that, from now on, this is something we are going to be keeping an eye on.

About New North ...

Since 1996 New North has been the voice of the municipalities of Northern Saskatchewan. Our goal, as defined by our mission statement, is to advocate, negotiate and initiate improvements in well-being of the residents of the Northern Saskatchewan Administrative District. Organized on the basis of strength through unity, New North partners with all northern stakeholders, from government and non-government agencies, associations and First Nations, to enhance the quality of life, create opportunities and build better futures, for the people of the north.

New North Executive

Mayor Bruce Fidler (Chair)
Mayor Robert St.Pierre (Deputy Chair)
Mayor Gord Stomp (Treasurer)
Mayor Mike Natomagan
Councillor Keith Laprise

New North Staff

Matt Heley
Chief Executive Officer
Phone: 306 425 5505
ceo.new.north@sasktel.net

Emily Ross
Executive Assistant
Phone: 306 425 5505
new.north@sasktel.net

New North SANC Services Inc

Phone: 306 425 5505
Fax: 306 425 5506
207 La Ronge Avenue
La Ronge, Sk

Monthly Newsletter Subscription Information

If you are receiving this it is probably because you are a subscriber or someone sent it to you. To subscribe or unsubscribe from the newsletter please email:

new.north@sasktel.net.

www.newnorthsask.org